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ABSTRACT

A study examined a national trend towards dropping Shakespeare and other Great Authors from college English major requirements, and asked what new courses are taking their places. Programs from 70 representative schools were analyzed. Results indicated that 23 schools require a course in Shakespeare, which may include other authors as well, but that 47 schools do not have this requirement. Results also indicated that courses in topics such as popular culture and sexuality are replacing standard literature courses. Findings suggest that familiarity with great literature is necessary for a well-rounded education, for English majors seeking employment, and for its cultural value. Appendix A describes standard literature requirements (or absences) and alternative courses for all 70 colleges; Appendix B presents a sampling of courses typical of new trends in the English curriculum. (EF)

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What English Majors Are Really Studying

A Report by the National Alumni Forum

Jerry L. Martin, President

December 1996

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THE SHAKESPEARE FILE

What English Majors Are Really Studying

- A Study by the National Alumni Forum -

> "During the last 20 years, the English profession has changed dramatically in its approach to literature." English Department Guidelines, Northwestern University
>
> "The discipline of literary study has changed a great deal in the last few decades -- so much so that it would be incorrect to say that study in this department is particularly one thing or another, or even that all faculty in the department would agree that 'literary' study is what we do and teach." English and American Literature and Language Guidelines, Harvard University

In the spring of 1996, Georgetown University set off a firestorm of protest when it dropped its Great Authors requirement for English majors. Until recently, at most universities, majors were required to take one or more of the three writers regarded as the pre-eminent representatives of English language and literature -- Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, and John Milton. Georgetown required students to take two. Beginning with the class of 1999, they will require none. Majors will be free from the burdens of the great writers, allowing more opportunity to study "Hardboiled Detective Fiction," "AIDS and Representation," and "History and Theory of Sexuality." Local school officials, who depend on universities such as Georgetown to train their English teachers, understandably expressed alarm. Commentators saw Georgetown's decision as a further step in the "dumbing down" of America.

In its defense, the university claimed that it was merely following a national trend. An initial survey by the National Alumni Forum, a non-profit organization dedicated to academic freedom and excellence, tended to confirm the university's claim. Of twenty-two randomly selected colleges and universities, thirteen had dropped their Great Authors requirement.

The initial survey was sufficiently troubling to warrant in-depth study. NAF launched an extensive research project to examine English curricula at 70 of the nation's top colleges and universities. Universities included those listed in the *U.S. News and World Report* top 50 colleges and universities, the Ivy League, the Seven Sisters, campuses in the two largest public systems, California and New York, and several other universities added for regional balance. In short, NAF studied 70 schools that set the standard for all the rest. (See Appendix A).

The study posed two questions: Is there, indeed, a national trend toward dropping Shakespeare and other Great Authors from English requirements? If so, what new courses are taking their place?

WHERE HAS SHAKESPEARE GONE?

The results of the study were worse than previously feared. The abandonment of Shakespeare requirements is not merely a trend; it is now the norm. Of the 70 universities, only 23 now require English majors to take a course in Shakespeare. And this result was reached even using a very generous definition of a Shakespeare requirement: Colleges requiring students to read at least two of three authors -- one of which is Shakespeare -- are classified as requiring Shakespeare, whether or not the student in fact reads the Bard.

The remaining 47 schools allow students to graduate with a B.A. in English without studying the language's greatest writer in any kind of depth. A substantial number of the institutions have English majors in which it is possible not to encounter Shakespeare at all, even in a survey course. (Appendix A lists requirements for each school). Institutions as "distinguished" as Amherst College and the University of Michigan are giving English degrees to people who may never have read a play or sonnet by Shakespeare.

When the National Alumni Forum sponsored a Shakespeare teach-in at Georgetown in April, news coverage of the event was filled with Shakespearean quotations and allusions. "It might be the unkindest cut of all," reported the Associated Press. "Some are coming to

praise Shakespeare, not to bury him," wrote one. "Et tu, Georgetown?" asked another. Macbeth's phrase, "full of sound and fury," appeared in several headlines. The sad truth is that these references, appearing in daily newspapers, could well be lost on current graduates of most top English departments.

Among the Ivy League schools studied, only Harvard requires a course in Shakespeare. At Columbia, the core curriculum exposes all undergraduates to great books, but the English department does nothing to ensure a study of greater depth for English majors. Thus, a Columbia English major can graduate with no greater knowledge of *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* than a chemistry major.

It should be noted that, for the purposes of this study, English departments have been given the benefit of the doubt. We have assumed that at least some selections from the Great Authors are read in survey courses. While Yale, for example, does not require Shakespeare, it does require three courses prior to 1800 where we assume students will be introduced to the Bard. Similarly, when the Vanderbilt University English department requires a survey course called "Representative English Writers," we assume that Shakespeare is taught in that course, and that an English major at Vanderbilt will thus likely read a play and maybe a sonnet or two by Shakespeare, even though Shakespeare is not required. This may not actually be the case. There is no way to know for sure because course descriptions do not include reading lists. In this respect as in others, this study is based entirely on materials English departments provided to NAF, some of which were more complete than others.

"National Liberal Arts Colleges" is the term *U.S. News* uses to discuss such colleges as Amherst, Carleton, Haverford, and Williams. One would assume, then, that the students at those schools are receiving a liberal arts education. Unfortunately, the NAF study did not bear out that assumption. Of the 25 national liberal arts colleges studied,* only Claremont McKenna, Hamilton, Middlebury, Smith and Wellesley require a course in Shakespeare for

*Some of the Seven Sisters also fall into this category.

their English majors. The other 20 schools do not require a Shakespeare course, and more than half of them do not require a course in any of the Great Authors. Particularly amazing is the English curriculum at Amherst College, the number one liberal arts college in the nation according to *U.S. News & World Report*. Amherst English majors face absolutely no requirements. No course, sequence, category, genre, or period is required. Evidently, the department believes that students who have not yet read the Great Authors are better able to judge whether their works are worth studying than their professors who have.

WHAT IS TAKING SHAKESPEARE'S PLACE?

Dropping Great Authors requirements might not be fatal if all other English courses were replete with excellent literature and, of course, many still are. But, at many universities, new English courses focus less on great literature than on works selected precisely because they are not great. The study found that, if Shakespeare is "out," popular culture is "in."

One sign of the change is the increasing use of the term, "cultural studies," which usually denotes the study of almost anything but Culture with a capital C. English courses on "culture" now include such topics as (in alphabetical order and in the exact words of the course descriptions): advertising imagery, AIDS activism, alehouses, atomic age, attitudes to marriage, big business, best-sellers, capture of the state, carnivals, CD ROMs, cheap ballads, computer games, consumers, electronic frontier, fashion, feminism, futurism, global factory, Hollywood films, homophobia, insurgent nationalism, internet, leisure, lesbian and gay people, living arrangements, Madonna, magazines, mail-order brides, market fairs, material technology, music videos, newspapers, oppression and marginalization, people of color, physical movements, politics of representation, Pop Art, power and social change, print media, radio, rock and rap music, soap operas, sites of conflict and struggle, socialist struggle, sports, television, textile trade, theme parks, third world liberation struggles,

transnationalism, urban poor, vagrancy, Vanilla Ice, work and play habits, world fairs, and world wide web. (See Appendix B for more information about these and other new English courses.)

Sometimes "popular" is right in the title of the course, as in "Popular Culture" at the University of California, Los Angeles, and "Popular Literature," at the State University of New York, Albany ("the best-seller, song lyrics, detective and mystery fiction ..."). Some courses focus on a particular genre of popular fiction, such as the detective novel. Georgetown, for example, offers four courses in this vein: "Film Noir/Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction," "Detective Fiction as Social Critique" (of "the nuclear family, traditional masculine values, and capitalist ideology"), "Prison Literature" ("literature by and about the imprisoned"), and "Genre: Gangster Films."

While one could envision a broad-based course tracing popular literature in its social context over the centuries, the new courses lack that breadth. At Duke, English students can take "Melodrama and Soap Opera." Bates offers English courses on Jamaica, on the 1950s ("Beatniks and Mandarins"), and on the U.S. Senate's Thomas-Hill Hearings. The University of Virginia offers a Senior Seminar, which should be the culminating intellectual experience for English majors. But we learn from the course description: "In the past, topics have included 'Marketing Miss America,' 'Rubys: Rich Urban Bikers,' 'Monticello and Graceland,' 'Hemingway in the Popular Press,' and 'White Trash.'"

Even courses that appear to be broad and basic often have disappointing content. The rich cultural tapestry suggested by "Memory and America" at the University of Virginia is belied by the use of "primarily ... non-fiction texts such as speeches, campaign biographies, and public documents." The standard course on "Theory and Practice of Literary Criticism" has new content at the University of Illinois at Chicago, devoted entirely to "issues surrounding the virtuality of cyberspace." Students read such "literature" as *Silicon Mirage* and *Data Trash*. The imposing "Languages of Community" at Cornell focuses on such inspiring works as "party platforms and speeches from the current presidential campaigns" as well as "innovative cultural texts such as alternative 'zines, Nuyorican performance poetry, and Internet newsgroups."

Some of the new courses look more like sociology or political science than English literature. At Indiana University, "Studies in British Commonwealth Culture" focuses on "Feminism, Nationalism, and Transnationalism." At Georgetown, it is English majors, not sociology students, who are given "Black Women in the United States," covering "health, violence, sexuality, work, and the family." And "International Culture and the New World Order" looks as if it wandered over from the School of Foreign Service. It is little wonder that, with such offerings, English majors may have little time for Shakespeare.

One of the strangest bedfellows is the combination of low culture with high theory, as if enough theoretical jargon made any subject worthy of study. Thus, Bowdoin offers "An Introduction to Literary Theory Through Popular Culture," in which "structuralist, deconstructive, feminist, psychoanalytic, new historicist, African-American, and lesbian and gay theory" are applied to "best-selling novels, music videos, Hollywood films, and soap operas." The University of Virginia's "Introduction to Cultural Studies" applies six modes of analysis, including post-colonial theory and the Frankfurt School to "sports, advertising, popular fiction, rock and rap music, Pop Art, AIDS activism, and television." Savoring its own abstractions, the University of Illinois at Chicago's "Reading Material: Rhetorical Criticism and the Mass Media," declares "The archaeology of the mass media will show that the epoch of the 'hyperreal' -- our epoch of telematics, informatics, genetics, and advertising -- emerges from a millenial process ...."

Even the Age of Shakespeare is not immune from the emphasis on popular culture. In "Renaissance Popular Culture" at the University of California, Santa Barbara, students read "the literature produced by and for craftsmen and laborers." And traditional courses in medieval and Renaissance literature (see Appendix B) now focus less on literature and more on social conditions, sexual topics, and non-literary documents.

In fact, of all popular culture, the most popular seems to be sex. Thus Georgetown offers English students both "History and Theories of Sexuality" (which seeks to "historicize contemporary theoretical debates about sexuality, in particular gay and lesbian studies and 'queer' theory as it is informed by African American and/or feminist theoretical

and political concerns") and "Theory of Gender and Sexuality" (which explores "changes in the construction/representation of gendered bodies and sexual difference" such as "the Enlightenment shift from one-sex to two-sex models, the late nineteenth century 'invention' of homosexual and heterosexual 'identities'"). "Enlightenment Sexualities" is available at Carnegie Mellon, "Literature and Sexualities" at Duke ("American and British representation of sexual identities and same-sex desire"), and at Oberlin you can take courses such as "The Uses of Deviance" ("Examples of deviance that seem to function as cultural capital might be Disraeli performing an effeminate Byron; the Ladies of Llangollen; late 1980s and early 1990s lesbian chic; and *Paris Is Burning*") or the "Seminar on Literary Theory and Criticism" which includes such topics as "PeeWee, k.d., Judy, Jodie, Dolly, and other queer divas: pop culture, cultural studies ... Theory and praxis: queer politics. ... S-M debates, ACT-UP, lesbian avengers, queer 'nationality,' Republican family values, NAMBLA, censorship and the arts ..."

While some of these courses may be worth taking, none are adequate substitutes for Shakespeare. Yet two-thirds of the universities surveyed allow English majors to graduate without requiring the great poet. As older faculty retire, standard literature courses are likely to fade away or to be filled with new, less substantial content. And the poor students who read *Data Trash* instead of *Hamlet* will have no way of knowing the magnitude of their loss.

TO WHOM DOES IT MATTER?

At two-thirds of the universities studied, the works of Shakespeare are no longer required for English majors. To whom should this matter?

It matters, first of all to students and their parents, who may be paying $100,000 for a college education. Electives can be attractive, but a person's entire life should not be determined by his or her preferences as a 19-year-old. Individuals will be exposed to popular culture their whole lives; college is the time for studying something deeper and more enduring. A college curriculum should not be a do-it-yourself kit. It is the faculty's

responsibility --with administrative support -- to create a rigorous, challenging course of study that ensures that the student will be fully prepared for a successful career and thoughtful life.

It matters also to employers, especially to the school systems, newspapers, publishers, and others who hire English majors. Ideally, every student should read Shakespeare -- if his works are not central to a liberal education, what is? But for English majors not to read Shakespeare is worse. It is like an M.D. without a course in anatomy. It is tantamount to fraud. Colleges do not just offer courses; they certify. A high school that hires an English major has a right to assume he or she is prepared to teach Shakespeare and other great authors. As one teacher said about the Georgetown changes, "If our teachers do not know Shakespeare, how can they convince students that the study of the history of their language through the poetry and plays of these giants is important."

In the last analysis, it matters to us all if Shakespeare and other great authors are allowed to languish. Concern about the "dumbing down" of America is widespread and well-justified. This country cannot expect a generation raised on gangster films and sex studies to maintain its leadership in the world. Or even its unity as a nation. Shakespeare has shaped our language and our culture. His works provide a common frame of reference that helps unite us into a single community of discourse.

Ironically, Hollywood is today doing more for cultural literacy than trendy English departments. As cultural commentator Michael Medved has observed, "Shakespeare is the most popular screenwriter in Hollywood." From Mel Gibson's "Hamlet" to Kenneth Branagh's "Henry V," audiences respond to the rich language, human drama, and enduring themes that touch their lives. It is sad to think that such achievements of the human spirit may be lost on future English majors.

Appendix A

Amherst College
The department declares that, rather than require a particular sequence of courses for all students, it "views its responsibility as a contract with the student to provide guidance, criticism, and support as the student plans his or her own course of study." In any case, majors are not required to take a course in Shakespeare or any other course or sequence.

Barnard College
Majors must take a course in the methods of literary analysis and two courses in Renaissance and Enlightenment literature. Two courses in literature, either American or British, before 1900 are required. A Shakespeare course is not required. Curiously, *minors* in English are required to take a course in either Shakespeare, Chaucer, or Milton.

Bates College
Three courses in pre-1800 literature and one course in critical thinking are required. A senior thesis is required. A course in Shakespeare is not required, nor is a survey course that covers Shakespeare.

Bowdoin College
Majors are required to take three courses in pre-1800 literature. Of these, only one may be Shakespeare, but it is not required that any of the courses be Shakespeare.

Brown University
A year-long survey course is required of all majors. Majors must take three courses in literature before 1789, two of which must focus on pre-1688 literature. Majors must also take a course in literature between 1789 and 1910 and one course in post-1910 literature. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

Bryn Mawr College
The major requires nine English courses. One of these may be in creative writing. Majors must take at least two courses in pre-1800 literature, and two in post-1800 literature. Shakespeare is not required and can be totally avoided.

California Institute of Technology
There is no English department or English major. Therefore, Cal Tech is not counted for purposes of this survey.

University of California at Berkeley
A course in Shakespeare is required, as are standard survey courses. Following that, the major chooses a concentration. A major could choose a concentration such as "Enlightenment" or "Nineteenth Century." But majors could also choose a concentration such as "Sexual Identity/Gender Studies" or "Folklore, Popular Culture, and Cultural Theory."

University of California at Davis
Majors must begin with a general course in either writing or literature. Majors must then take a course in poetry and three survey courses in literature. Majors must take a course in Shakespeare, two period courses in pre-1800 British literature, a course in pre-Civil War American literature, and one course in post-Civil War American literature.

University of California at Irvine
English majors must choose three survey courses dealing with different genres such as poetry or drama. They must take "Literary Theory and Criticism" and a seminar in "Literary Theory." They must take a second undergraduate seminar called "Literary Theory and Practice." They must take four period survey courses covering from Medieval times to the Twentieth Century. Majors must take "Multicultural Topics in English-Language Literature" or "Multicultural Topics in Comparative Literature." Majors need not take a course in Shakespeare. In fact, they cannot, because no specific course in Shakespeare is offered. Likewise, no course in Milton or Chaucer is offered.

University of California at Los Angeles
Setting a standard for rigor, UCLA requires all majors to take two courses in Shakespeare, a course in Chaucer, and a course in Milton. All majors must take an additional course in pre-1800 British literature. All majors must take three survey courses of English literature: a pre-1660 course; a course from 1660-1832, and an 1832 to the present course. All majors must take a course in composition, rhetoric, and language, and all majors must take a course in critical reading and writing.

University of California at San Diego
Majors must take two survey courses -- either two in British literature or one in British literature and one in American literature. Majors must also take two of the following four courses: Introduction to African American Literature, Introduction to Asian-American Literature, Introduction to Chicano Literature, and Introduction to the Literature of the United States. Majors must then take two courses in pre-1660 British literature, a course in British literature from 1660 to 1832, a course in British literature since 1832, a course in pre-1860 American literature, and a course in American literature since 1860.

University of California at Santa Barbara
Majors must take courses in Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Milton, a course about the literary canon, and three semesters of survey courses.

University of California at Santa Cruz
All majors must take Literature 1, described as "a close reading and analysis of literary texts." They must choose one course from a series on "categories, methodologies, and problems of literary studies" and one from a series on "historical, intellectual, and social placement of literary texts." Majors must also take a course studying "contemporary approaches to literary and cultural theories." A course in Shakespeare is not required, and depending on the syllabus of Literature 1, Shakespeare can be avoided.

Carleton College
Two survey courses in literature are required, as is "Methods of Interpretation." Majors must also complete two courses in each of four categories: Chaucer, Medieval literature, English Renaissance verse, Renaissance drama, and Shakespeare; The Faerie Queen, Paradise Lost, Restoration and Eighteenth Century drama, Swift, Pope and Johnson, Eighteenth Century fiction, and Jane Austen; Romantic poets, studies in Victorian literature, Nineteenth Century fiction, early modern drama, Twentieth Century fiction, Twentieth Century poetry, contemporary drama, contemporary poetry, and contemporary British and Irish literature; introduction to African-American literature; introduction to American literature; the Harlem Renaissance, African-American autobiography, studies in American literature, and the African-American novel.

Carnegie Mellon University
Majors must take a core course in "Literary & Cultural Studies" and a core course in "Rhetorical Traditions." Majors must also take two "survey of forms" courses such as "Poetry" or "Fiction." There are no period requirements, no major writers requirement, and no Shakespeare requirement.

University of Chicago
All majors must take "Methodology and Issues in Textual Studies." In addition, they are required to take two courses in literature before 1700 and two courses in literature between 1700 and 1900 (with at least one of those courses being a Period course); at least one course each in British and American literature; and at least one course in each of the following genres: fiction, poetry, and drama/film.

Claremont McKenna College
All majors must take four of the following five courses: a course in Shakespeare, three survey courses in British literature, and a course in American literature. They must also take a course in literary criticism.

Colby College
Majors are required to take "Literary Studies," "Critical Theory," and "Historical Context." Majors must also take four "period and genre" courses of their choice, two studies of "special subjects" of their choice, and a senior seminar. A course in Shakespeare is not required. It is unclear whether Shakespeare is taught in the three required courses above.

Colgate College
Eight English courses are required for the major. Three must be in pre-1800 literature, one must be in British literature from 1800-1945, and one must be pre-1945 American literature. A course in Shakespeare is not required, nor is any course which covers Shakespeare.

Columbia University
No courses are required for all majors. Majors must choose four period survey courses from a list of eight. Shakespeare can be avoided completely as part of the program for English

majors. However, as part of Columbia's core curriculum, all undergraduates take a course in which they encounter Shakespeare.

Connecticut College
Majors must take a year-long survey course in English literature. A seminar in literary interpretation is required. Majors must also take two courses in pre-1800 literature and two courses in post-1800 literature. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

Cornell University
Majors must take two foreign language literature courses. Majors must take three courses in literature before 1800. Shakespeare is not required to be among them. Survey courses in British literature are recommended but not required.

Dartmouth College
All majors must take one course from each of four categories: Medieval-Renaissance; Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries; Nineteenth Century; and Twentieth Century. All majors must choose one course dealing with a single author. They may choose from among Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer, Ben Jonson, Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, Emily Dickinson, "Twentieth Century American Boxing Fiction and Film," and other choices.

Davidson College
Majors must take "The Study of Literature," two survey courses in British literature spanning the Middle Ages to 1850, and a survey course in American literature before 1870. A Senior Colloquium is required; in 1995, the topic was "literature and the visual arts." A course in Shakespeare is not required.

Duke University
Majors must choose either "Poetry, Fiction, and Drama" or "Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope." Majors must also take a course in either Shakespeare, Chaucer, or Milton. Additionally, two courses in pre-1900 British literature must be taken, one of which must be pre-1800.

Emory University
All majors must take one course in poetry, two courses in pre-1660 British literature, two courses in post-1660 British literature, and two courses in American literature. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

University of Florida
Majors must take four courses in British and American literature, at least one of which must be from the pre-1800 era. They must also take two courses, at least one of which is from any two of the following areas: Criticism and Theory, Advanced Writing and Linguistics. A course in Shakespeare is offered but not required.

Georgetown University
Under the rules dropped last year, majors were required to take 12 courses, including one course in each of five fields -- Old and Middle English, Renaissance, Restoration and 18th Century, 19th Century, and American literature -- as well as two of the three Great Authors -- Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Milton. Under new requirements, majors take 11 courses. Students will choose among three tracks, only one of which -- "Literature and Literary History" -- stresses great works of literature. The "culture" track focuses on "social contexts and cultural practices, values and institutions" and uses "interdisciplinary" methods. The "writing" track emphasizes "the process and theory of writing" and studies "a wide range of literary and non-literary genres such as mass media." The key seminar for the writing track last spring was "Genre: Gangster Films." The Georgetown dean wrote alumni last spring, denying that there had been a significant change: "Nothing has been lost, nothing has been added."

Grinnell College
A two-semester survey course in literature from Old English to the present is required, as is one course in American literature. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

Hamilton College
Majors must take "Reading Literature" and "Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Austen," in which sonnets and one Shakespeare play are taught. Three additional courses in pre-1800 literature are required.

Harvard College
A year-long survey course in literature is required for majors in their sophomore year. Additionally, a sophomore seminar is required, as is a course in Shakespeare.

Haverford College
Majors must take nine courses in English. At least two courses must deal with literature before 1800. Two courses must deal with British literature, and two must deal with American literature. Shakespeare is not required and can be totally avoided.

University of Illinois at Chicago
English majors may select either the "literature option" or the "writing option." Those selecting the "literature option" must take a course in Shakespeare, two survey courses of British literature, one survey course of American literature, a course in literary criticism, and a course in Twentieth Century literature. Majors must also take a course in two of the following five groups: literary genres; criticism and theory; cinematic narrative; cultural studies; and language and rhetoric. Those choosing the "writing option" have more limited literature requirements, but they still must take a course in Shakespeare.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
All majors must take a course in Shakespeare and a course in a major author other than Shakespeare. Majors must take a course in poetry, a two-semester survey of British

literature, and a survey course in American literature. Majors must select an additional pre-1800 British literature course and a post-1800 British literature course, as well as another American literature course.

Indiana University at Bloomington
Majors must take "Literary Interpretation," three survey courses covering different periods of English literature, and one course in American literature. A course in Shakespeare is not required, though the department "recommends that majors considering graduate work in English take elective courses in a variety of periods in English and American literature" - including courses in Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Milton.

Johns Hopkins University
All majors must take "Principles and Practices," a seminar in critical reading and writing. Three pre-1800 literature courses must be taken. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
There is no English department or English major. Therefore, MIT is not counted for purposes of this survey.

University of Michigan
Majors must take "What is Literature" and a survey course in poetry. Majors must take a course in pre-1600 literature, but Shakespeare can be avoided altogether. Majors must take two additional pre-1830 courses; again Shakespeare can be avoided. There is an American literature requirement, but it can be fulfilled without studying such authors as Melville, Dickinson, and Twain. Majors must also take a "New Traditions" course.

Middlebury College
All majors must take "Interpretation of English Literature" and "Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton." Majors must take a course in Shakespeare. Majors must also take one course in medieval and Renaissance literature, one course in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century literature, one course in literature after 1800, and one course in literary history and criticism.

Mount Holyoke College
Majors must take "Introduction to the Study of Literature" and "Development of English Literature: Medieval through Commonwealth." Majors must choose one other period survey course. One advanced course in pre-1700 literature and one advanced course in literature from 1700 to 1900 are required. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Majors, except those exempted through advanced placement testing, must take a two-semester course called "English Composition and Rhetoric." All majors must take a course in Shakespeare, featuring 12 to 15 plays. Additionally, majors must choose two courses from the following: "The English Drama to 1642," "English Literature of the Middle Ages," "Chaucer," "Sixteenth Century English Literature," "Seventeenth Century English

Literature," "Milton," "English Drama of the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century," and "Prose and Poetry of the Classical Period." Majors are asked to choose either "The Chief Romantic Writers," "English Literature, 1832-1890," "English Literature, 1870-1910," or "The English Novel." Majors must take a survey course in American literature. Majors must also take either "The American Novel," "Afro-American Literature," "American Women Authors," "Southern Women Writers," or "Southern American Literature."

Northwestern University
Majors must take one course in each of seven categories: Literary theory and criticism; medieval and Tudor literature; Renaissance literature; Restoration and 18th century literature; 19th century British literature; modern British, American, and post-colonial literature; and American literature before 1900. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

University of Notre Dame
Majors must accumulate a minimum of 27 credit hours in addition to credits received for two freshman courses and one literature course. The credits must include six credit hours of British Literary Traditions from the beginning through the 19th century; three credit hours in American Literary Traditions; and 18 credit hours in advanced courses including a one-semester course for seniors designated "Seminar." Seminars include such topics as Shakespeare, Renaissance Poetry, Sensationalism, Arthurian Literature, Victorian Prose, and Poetry and Performance.

Oberlin College
Majors need to take a course in "Critical Methods." Additionally, they must take three courses in literature written before 1900, two of which should be in literature written before 1800. Neither Shakespeare nor any specific survey course is required.

University of Pennsylvania
Majors must take four survey courses: one in British poetry, one in American literature, and two in British literature; or select seven courses concerning various periods of English and American literature. Seniors must write an essay of 20-25 pages. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

Pomona College
No specific courses or departments (excluding "Critical Inquiry") are prescribed for graduation. Instead the college states its belief "that the classes students choose for themselves are more likely to be interesting, relevant, and worthwhile in the long run than a specific list of required courses."

Princeton University
Students must take the Junior Seminar in critical writing as well as three courses in literature before 1800, two courses in literature after 1800 and one course in "approaches to literature." Students must choose from one of five programs of study, of which one, "English Literature and Theater," requires a course in Shakespeare.

Radcliffe College
A year-long survey course in literature is required for majors in their sophomore year. Additionally, a sophomore seminar is required, as is a course in Shakespeare.

Rice University
Two survey courses in British literature and a survey course in American literature are required of all majors. Additionally, majors must take one course in pre-1800 literature, one course in post-1800 literature, and one course in American literature. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

University of San Francisco
Majors must take "How Literature Works," "Contexts and Uses of Literature," "Studies in Critical Approaches," a junior-senior seminar, a two-semester course in "English Literary Tradition," a survey course in American literature, one of two courses called "English Fiction," and one of two courses called "American Fiction." All majors must take a Shakespeare course which is exclusively for majors.

Smith College
Majors must take a survey course and courses on two of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton. Majors must also take eight additional courses including a one semester course from four of the following five areas: Medieval or Renaissance; British or American from 1660-1830; British or American from 1830 to 1914; British, American or Commonwealth since 1914; and Writing, History of the Language, or Critical Theory.

University of Southern California
USC offers three different English majors. A student can major either in English literature, American Literature, or Creative Writing. The English literature major is the most traditional. It requires two survey courses in British literature, a survey course in American literature, and a course in Shakespeare. It also requires an additional course both in early English literature and later English literature. It further requires majors to take one course each from two of the following three categories: "Gender Studies," "Interdisciplinary Approaches," which includes "Visual and Popular Culture," "Literature and Film," and "Sexual Textual Diversity," and "Language or Theory." The American literature major requires the survey courses in British literature but does not require Shakespeare. It also requires a course in "Ethnic American Literature" such as "African-American Poetry and Drama" or "Chicano Literature." The creative writing major requires survey courses but not Shakespeare.

Stanford University
Majors must take a course from each of the following areas: medieval; Renaissance; Shakespeare; Restoration and Eighteenth Century; Romantic and Victorian; American literature written before 1900; modern literature written in English; and poetry and poetics.

State University of New York at Albany
Majors must take either "Reading Literature," "Reading Prose Fiction," "Reading Drama," or "Reading Poetry." For each of these courses there is a regular class and a recommended "writing-intensive version"; majors may select either one. Majors must take "Introduction to Literary Study." They must also take a "generic survey course" of their choice which can be fulfilled by taking "American Drama," a course focusing on twentieth century American playwrights. Majors must take a course in an "author." This could be Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, or it could be "Study of a British Author," "Study of an American Author," or "Comparative Study of Authors." In these latter courses, the author to be studied "varies from section to section and session to session." Majors must take one course in the literature of a "subculture." Such a course could be "Growing Up in America," "Minority Writers," or "Jewish-American Literature." Two period courses are required which might include "Modern Drama," "The Historical Imagination," and a course in the last 25 years of American novels. It is possible for Shakespeare to be avoided altogether.

State University of New York at Binghamton
Majors must take a "background course" which is usually a course in the Bible, "Foundations of English literature," a literature course in the Classics department, or "Plato and Aristotle." Majors must take "Literary Interpretation." Majors must take a course in Shakespeare and a course in Chaucer. Majors must take two courses in two different periods before 1800 and two courses in two different periods after 1800.

State University of New York at Buffalo
Majors must select two courses from the following: Advanced Writing - Special Kinds; Writing Prose Fiction; World Masterpieces; Major British Writers; Major American Writers; Literary Types; or Literary Approaches (Women's Writers, Best Sellers). Three upper-level period courses are required. Majors must take two of the following: Chaucer and Medieval Literature; Shakespeare; and Milton.

State University of New York at Stony Brook
The major is highly structured. A course in Shakespeare is required. A survey course of British literature spanning from Old English to Milton is required. Students must then take either a second survey course in British literature from Dryden through the Nineteenth Century, or a survey course in American literature. A course in literary analysis and argumentation is required, as is a course in the history and structure of the English language. One course in twentieth century literature is required. Two additional "period courses" are required.

Swarthmore College
Majors are required to take three courses in pre-1830 literature, 3 courses in post-1830 literature, and one course in critical theory. There is no requirement to take a Shakespeare course. Because there are no requirements for survey courses, Shakespeare can be avoided altogether.

University of Texas at Austin
Majors must take a course in either Shakespeare, Chaucer, or Milton. Majors must take a course in pre-1800 literature, a course in Nineteenth Century literature, a course in pre-1865 American literature, a course in American literature from 1865 to 1920, and a course in Twentieth century literature.

Trinity College (CT)
Majors are required to take one "close reading" course. The department requires two courses on "cultural context," one of which may be a survey in British, American, or African-American literature. The department also requires three advanced courses in pre-1800 literature and two advanced courses in post-1800 literature. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

Tufts University
All majors must take two seminars in writing. All are required to take one of four survey courses. Two of these options deal with British literature, and one deals with American literature. The fourth option is "Black World Literature" and deals with "fiction, poetry, and drama written principally in English by black writers from Africa, the Caribbean, and South America." It is possible to be an English major with no exposure to Shakespeare at all -- even through survey courses.

Vanderbilt University
Majors must all take "Introduction to Poetry." Majors must take a two-semester survey called "Representative English Writers" and a survey course in American literature. Majors must take a course dealing with pre-1600 literature, a course dealing with literature from 1600-1800, a course dealing with literature from 1800-1900, and a course in twentieth century literature. A course in Shakespeare is not required.

Vassar College
Majors must take one course in Nineteenth Century literature, one course in Twentieth Century, and three courses covering at least two of the following periods: Medieval; Renaissance; Restoration, and Eighteenth Century. Every student must also take at least one course in American literature. Shakespeare is not required, and can be avoided altogether.

University of Virginia
Majors must take a two-semester survey in literature. Majors must take a course in Shakespeare, a non-Shakespeare British literature course, and a course in pre-1865 American literature. Majors must also take a course in a "non-traditional" subject such as "Women's Studies/Gender Studies" or "African literature."

Washington University
Majors must take two of the following: "Chief English Writers I" (Chaucer through Milton); "Masterpieces of European Literature I"; "Chief English Writers II" (post-Milton to Joyce); or "Masterpieces of European Literature II" (Western literature, 17th-20th

centuries). In addition, majors must take 24 units of advanced courses (one of which must treat texts written before 1800), including a Shakespeare course.

Washington and Lee University
All majors must take "Fundamentals of Literary and Scholarly Practice." Majors must also take two period courses covering either British or American literature or both; as well as 24 additional credits focusing on early British literature, British literature from the Restoration to the present; and American literature.

Wellesley College
All students majoring in English must take a course in Shakespeare, as well as a course in literary criticism, and two courses in pre-1900 literature, at least one of which must focus on pre-1800 literature.

Wesleyan University
Students must take the "Study of Literature," as well as two courses dealing with English or American literature before 1800, and two with "'historicity,' the interaction between historical and social processes and culture." In addition, all majors must take a course in theory and focus at least three courses in their area of concentration.

Williams College
Majors must take "Techniques in Reading." Three courses in pre-1800 literature are required. One course in Nineteenth Century literature is required. One course in "literary criticism" is required. No course in Shakespeare is required, nor would Shakespeare necessarily be encountered while fulfilling other requirements.

University of Wisconsin at Madison
Majors must take a survey course in British literature before 1800. They may then choose between taking "English Literature since 1800" and an elective in American literature, or taking "American Literature 1620-present" and an elective in post-1800 British literature. All majors must take a course in Shakespeare. All majors must take an additional course in literature before 1800.

Yale University
According to the course catalog, an English major must take "Major English Poets." However, if the student does not take that course, he or she must take two terms of "The European Literary Tradition" survey as well as four advanced courses that deal intensively with certain major English poets. Students must also take four courses in English literature before 1800.

Appendix B

NEW TRENDS IN ENGLISH COURSES

The following is a sampling of courses typical of new trends in the English curriculum. Quotations are from descriptions provided by the English departments themselves. Some colleges provide detailed course descriptions and some only titles or brief catalogue notes. Those that provide descriptions are disproportionately represented here. Other colleges may well have courses of the same type.

The following categories overlap each other -- for example, popular culture could be subsumed under cultural studies. They are offered merely as useful groupings that highlight current trends.

1. Cultural Studies

Within English departments, this is a rapidly growing field. At many universities, "cultural studies" is now an area of concentration for English majors. The recent change in Georgetown requirements, for example, creates "cultural studies" as an alternative to the track that emphasizes the classics. The following courses are typical.

- **Duke University, "Introduction to Cultural Studies,"** includes analysis of "sports and leisure, film and photography, law and the arts, popular and classical music, painting and advertising imagery."
- **University of California, Santa Barbara, "Cultural Representations: Science and Technology,"** looks at everything from computer games and the world wide web to world fairs and theme parks.
- **Georgetown University, "Issues in Cultural Studies: Appropriation and Cultural Style,"** places Madonna and Vanilla Ice alongside *Huck Finn* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* in the consideration of "social difference and dispossession."

- **University of California, San Diego, "Popular Culture,"** examines "popular cultural practices" as "sites of conflict and struggle."
- **State University of New York, Albany, "Popular Literature,"** covers "the best-seller, song lyrics, detective and mystery fiction, books that have been in vogue on the campus during the last 20 years," and carries the note: "May be repeated once for credit when content varies."

2. Detective and Prison Fiction

Courses on detective fiction are widespread. Georgetown's four related courses are offered as examples.

- **Georgetown University, "Film Noir/Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction"**: "a world-weary form of the mystery story that originated in the pulp magazines of the 1920s."
- **Georgetown University, "Detective Fiction as Social Critique."** "In particular, the course will focus on how these novels critique and offer alternatives to the nuclear family, traditional masculine values, and capitalist ideology."
- **Georgetown University, "Prison Literature."** "The United States has the highest per capita imprisonment rate in the world. Over 4 million people are on probation, parole, in jail or prison. In this context we will read a selection of literature by and about the imprisoned." Students will conduct a research project on "current issues and conflicts in imprisonment" and are encouraged to work with "ex-inmate" and other programs to "help halt the 'prison mill.'"
- **Georgetown University, "Genre: The Gangster Film."** "Well-dressed hoods, dark interior shots, beautiful women, gore, and cops flimsily describe the gangster film." The course explores "the tropes of masculinity" and "circulations of illegitimacy."

3. Courses Not Broad Based

Many of the new English courses focus on a surprisingly narrow range of issues.

- **Georgetown University, "England in the 1890s,"** focuses entirely on women's literature, "the role of women in imperialist thought," and "turn-of-the-century images of women in painting, book design, and magazine illustrations."
- **University of California, Santa Barbara, "Cultures of Business"** -- a course restricted to English majors and hence not open to business students -- ponders "How does big business affect everyday culture? What is business trying to do with culture these days?" Readings include such recent works as *Snapshots from Hell* and *Voluntary Slavery*, and films such as "Roger and Me," "Bladerunner," and "Wall Street."
- **University of Florida, "Women in Popular Culture,"** examines "the poetics of expression" and "women and gender representation in advertising, magazines, computer games and CD ROMs, television, music videos, fashion, and film."
- **Duke University, "Melodrama and Soap Opera,"** is cross-listed in Women's Studies.
- **Bowdoin College, "Literature of the American Suburb."**
- **Bowdoin College, "'When Do We Live?': British and American Boarding School Fiction."**
- **Connecticut College, "From Selma to Saigon: A Look at the '60s."**
- **Tufts University, "Girls' Books,"** will "look at the ways that girls' books construct our culture, particularly our ideas about agency and sexuality."
- **Bates College, "Cultural Production and Social Context, Jamaica."** Cross-listed with Anthropology.
- **Bates College, "Beatniks and Mandarins: A Literary and Cultural History of the American Fifties,"** focuses on Norman Mailer, Jack Kerouac, Lionel Trilling, and Film Noir.
- **Bates College, "Sexual Harassment and the U.S. Senate's Thomas-Hill Hearings."** Cross-listed with Sociology.
- **University of Virginia, Senior Seminar.** "In the past, topics have included 'Marketing Miss America,' 'Rubys: Rich Urban Bikers,' 'Monticello and Graceland,' 'Hemingway in the Popular Press,' and 'White Trash.'"

4. Disappointing Content

Even courses that appear to be broad and basic often have disappointing content.

- **Oberlin College, "Literature and Experience,"** focuses entirely on the topic, "Reading Jazz: Are You Hep to the Jive?"
- **University of Virginia, "Memory and America,"** uses "primarily ... non-fiction texts such as speeches, campaign biographies and public documents."
- **University of Virginia, "Modern American Authors,"** fails to go beyond the city limits in the section called, "Ain't There Only Hustlers in Chicago?" Chicago writers are studied in the context of "the Haymaker riots and the rise of the communist party, the Negro migrations from the south between World War I through the 1920s, and the 1968 Democratic convention."
- **University of Southern California, "Literature and Society,"** is limited to "discourses about AIDS in the U.S."
- **Colby College, "Art and Oppression,"** focuses on "images of the lesbian and gay experience in painting, photography, film, and television" and "the expression of a radical lesbian and gay political voice."
- **Colgate University, "Special Topics in Contemporary Critical Theory,"** deals solely with "verbal offense as a problematic discourse in a postmodern world."
- **University of California, Santa Barbara, "Topics in Literature,"** focuses on a very selective topic, "Black Power Movement by White Authors."
- **Cornell University, "Languages of Community,"** focuses on "party platforms and speeches from the current presidential campaigns" and "innovative cultural texts such as alternative 'zines, Nuyorican performance poetry, and Internet newsgroups." Topics include "the definition of a Queer community in the wake of Stonewall and AIDS, the current popularity of talk radio programming, and what campus publications call 'the Cornell community.'"
- **University of Southern California, "The Literatures of America,"** is limited to "'Minority' Discourse in the U.S.," which "investigate[s] the experiences of

marginalized people in the United States" and raises "questions of power and of social change."

- **University of Illinois at Chicago, "Theory and Practice of Literary Criticism,"** is devoted entirely to "issues surrounding the virtuality of cyberspace." The reading list includes such titles as *Virtual Reality, Silicon Mirage,* and *Data Trash.* There is a warning to students who are not "web-site surfers."
- **Carleton College, "Learning to Curse,"** is devoted entirely to Irish and African-American texts and investigates "political, social, and economic exploitation."

5. Literature as Social Science

Some of the courses look more like sociology or political science than English literature. Here is a sampler.

- **Indiana University, "Studies in British or Commonwealth Culture,"** focuses on "Feminism, Nationalism, and Transnationalism" and "chart[s] the various negotiations between feminism and nationalism in India, Ireland, and Palestine." Topics include the "global factory," mail-order brides, how women comprise "one of the most exploited workforces on the globe, and how they are interpellated as consumers of products which are often dangerous to their health and pocketbooks." "[N]ovels, solitary accounts, and other forms of life writing (such as the testimonial) by women in insurgent nationalist struggles" are supplemented by such films as "Fast Food Women" and "Avon Goes to the Amazon."
- **Georgetown University, "Black Women in the United States"** covers "health, violence, sexuality, work, and the family."
- **Georgetown University, "International Culture and the New World Order,"** covers topics such as "the effects of colonialism/imperialism" and "the relations of forces that define the post-colonial situation."
- **Georgetown University, "Feminism and Postcolonial Theory"** "insist[s] on the question of sexual difference in postcolonial theory" and "force[s] the question of racial difference and national identity in feminist theory."

- **Haverford College, "Postcolonial Women Writers,"** studies the "narrative strategies enabling and sometimes subverting historically and culturally specific negotiations between the claims of postcolonial, class, and feminist politics. Satisfies Social Justice requirement."
- **University of North Carolina, "American Literature of Resistance and Protest,"** focuses on "movements of resistance and protest in the Americas (e.g., labor, human rights, environment, women, national liberation)." "Fills Aesthetic Perspective requirement."
- **University of Florida, "Resistance Literature,"** studies "the articulation of resistance against diverse oppressions, e.g., imperialism, racism, the violence of patriarchy, and contemporary capitalism."

6. Popular Culture and Literary Theory

One of the strangest bedfellows is the combination of low culture with high theory, as if enough theoretical jargon made any subject worthy of study.

- **Bowdoin College, "An Introduction to Literary Theory Through Popular Culture."** "Readings in structuralist, deconstructive, feminist, psychoanalytic, new historicist, African-American, and lesbian and gay theory are paired with examples from popular or mass-cultural forms such as best-selling novels, music videos, Hollywood films, and soap operas."
- **University of Virginia, "Introduction to Cultural Studies"** surveys "the basic theoretical approaches to high and low culture including: cultural anthropology, the Frankfurt School, the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, post-colonial theory, critical race theory, gay and lesbian studies. Objects of analysis may include: sports, advertising, popular fiction, rock and rap music, Pop Art, AIDS activism, and television."
- **Indiana University, "Avant-Pop"** shows the good sense to ask whether it has gone too far: "[A]re avant-pop writers simply 'slumming' in popular culture?"

- **University of Illinois at Chicago, "Reading Material: Rhetorical Criticism and the Mass Media"** focuses on the relation between popular media and "the rise of capitalism (Marx), nihilism (Heidegger), and post-modernity (Baudrillard)." "This archaeology of the mass media will show that the epoch of the 'hyperreal' -- our epoch of telematics, informatics, genetics, and advertising -- emerges from a millenial process ... and we will then examine in detail ... the mass media as prosthetic extensions of the body, the nervous system, and the State (McLuhan); the mass media and its spectacular productions as a 'monopoly over appearances' in capitalist society; and the mass media as a 'tactical hallucination' masking the disappearance of 'reality' into the order of 'simulation' (Baudrillard). All these theories focus on .. 'the specialization of power' and ... the 'empire of signs.'"

7. "Traditional" Courses

Even the Age of Shakespeare is not immune from the emphasis on popular culture. **University of California, Santa Barbara, "Renaissance Popular Culture,"** covers "the literature produced by and for craftsmen and laborers" along with "everyday life," including such topics as "the rise of alehouses" and "the proliferation of cheap ballads."

Most college catalogues list many traditional courses. It is only when detailed descriptions are available, as they are at Georgetown, that one can determine the actual content and character of the courses.

- **Georgetown University, "The Medieval-Renaissance Survey,"** includes great authors but "[e]mphasis will be placed on the social conditions for literary production and interpretation."
- **Georgetown University, "Medieval Literature,"** centers on "Gender, Sex, and Text," examining "cultural configurations of gender and sexuality."
- **Georgetown University, "Renaissance Literature,"** focuses on "Women, Law, and Drama." Students read "plays, court records, legal and social texts."

- **Oberlin College, "Honors Seminar: Shakespeare,"** focuses on "social constructions of gender and sexuality" and ponders "the commodification of women in marriage" and "homosocial male bonds" which are "dependent upon the suppression or channeling of erotic desire and on the coercive constructions of 'male' and 'female' gender qualities."

Some colleges require a certain number of courses from earlier periods, e.g., "two courses on literature before 1850." Courses on Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton would meet this requirement, but so would courses such as the following:

- **Georgetown University, "Reading for Sexual Difference: Early Modern Texts."** "'Sex' may be an invention of the eighteenth century, 'homosexuality" an invention of the nineteenth century, and 'gay, lesbian, and queer' inventions of our own time and place, but early modern Europe witnessed the beginnings of these ways of categorizing experience."
- **Connecticut College, "Representing Women, 1660-1820: 'Chaste Pens and Scribbling Ladies'"** pays "[p]articular attention to ideas of female sexuality" and considers "[h]ow the emergence of women as public consumers and producers of literature challenged patriarchal institutions."

Other examples of "new wine in old bottles":

- **University of Florida, "Honors Seminar: The Cultural Production of Henry James."** A course simply called, "Henry James," would be "predicated on the idea that there is an identifiable, stable, and culturally valuable object called an Author bearing the proper name, 'Henry James.'" This course challenges that assumption.
- **Bowdoin College, "Henry James and E. M. Forster,"** is now devoted to "representations of desire, stillness, vulgarity, 'the other,' knowledge, transgression, surveillance, and power" and looks at "the role of 'the closet' in their texts and lives." "The course is part of the curriculum in gay and lesbian studies."

8. Sex

Of all popular culture, the most popular seems to be sex.

- **Georgetown University, "History and Theories of Sexuality."** "This course seeks to historicize contemporary theoretical debates about sexuality, in particular gay and lesbian studies and 'queer' theory as it is informed by African American and/or feminist theoretical and political concerns."
- **Georgetown University, "Theory of Gender and Sexuality,"** explores "changes in the construction/representation of gendered bodies and sexual difference (e.g., the Enlightenment shift from one-sex to two-sex models, the late nineteenth century 'invention' of homosexual and heterosexual 'identities')." Like so many of the new courses, students will be required to watch films, presumably about gendered bodies and sexual identities.
- **Carnegie Mellon University, "Enlightenment Sexualities."**
- **Vanderbilt University, "Desire in America,"** deals with "the influence of desire and repression in shaping American culture and character."
- **University of Florida, "Honors Seminar: Sexuality: Issues in Theory and History,"** explores "prominent critiques, remobilizations, and conflicts -- especially in the domains of debates over feminism, race, post-colonialism, lesbian and gay studies and queer theory."
- **Duke University, "Literature and Sexualities."** "American and British representation of sexual identities and same-sex desire, ranging from proliferation of homo/hetero-sexual discourses in the late nineteenth century to literature about AIDS in contemporary mass media."
- **Amherst College, "Studies in the Literature of Sexuality,"** focuses on "Queer Fictions: Texts from the Turn of the Century." "The period 1885-1920 appears to have been a defining moment in the history of sexuality in the West. A proliferating representation of sexual practices and identities, particularly around concepts of the normal and the perverse, had begun to center the discourse of erotic life, finding rich and

complex (if commonly veiled and coded) articulation in the fictions of literary modernism."

- **Bowdoin College, "The Uses of Deviance,"** explores "two ways of thinking about sexuality/gender deviance -- as a device for social control and as a means to expression or empowerment. ... Examples of deviance that seem to function as cultural capital might be Disraeli performing an effeminate Byron; the Ladies of Llangollen; late 1980s and early 1990s lesbian chic; and *Paris Is Burning.*"
- **Wesleyan University, "Reading Bodily Fictions,"** approaches "the topic of bodily fictions from two perspectives: we will study representations of bodies in various works of fiction ... and we will explore the multiple cultural fictions routinely produced and reproduced about such bodies. Some of the themes to be examined include: literary representations of hysteria, 'foreign' bodies and the politics of race, diseased bodies and fictions of health and normalcy, discipline and the modern body, feminist theory and reproductive technologies." "This course counts toward the English Department's theory requirement."
- **Georgetown University, "Unspeakable Lives: Gay and Lesbian Narratives,"** treats "politically problematic sexualities" as "the politics of sex informs a new cultural aesthetic of disease." Readings include "autobiography and diary, poetry, polemic and sermon and advertising."
- **Bowdoin College, "Thinking Queer,"** discusses such topics as "the centrality or marginality of sexual practice in gay and lesbian identities" and "various models of resistance in the age of AIDS" through the study of "canonic literary texts, movies, and newspaper and magazine accounts."
- **Oberlin College, "Seminar in Literary Theory and Criticism."** The topic is "Queer Theory," which includes "PeeWee, k.d., Judy, Jodie, Dolly, and other queer divas: pop culture, cultural studies ... Theory and praxis: queer politics. ... S-M debates, ACT-UP, lesbian avengers, queer 'nationality,' Republican family values, NAMBLA, censorship and the arts ..."

- **Cornell, "Gay Fiction,"** discusses "the literary and cinematic construction of desire between men" and offers "an overview of male homoerotic narratives in literature and film." The course is cross-listed with Women's Studies. Topics include "sublimation, sexual encoding, the gay outlaw, decadence, psychoanalysis, AIDS, and desire and identification across race, class, generation, and sexual orientation." Students must pay a "nominal lab fee" for weekly film screenings.
- **Amherst College, "Black Gay Fiction,"** emphasizes "identity politics" and offers "'queer' readings of 'canonical' texts."
- **Tufts University, "Queering/Reading,"** has the following daunting description: "Setting in relation to each other the ideologically-oriented and politically-determined thematics that motivate queer theory (and cultural studies), on the one hand, and the linguistically-based and textually-focused methodologies of post-structural reading, on the other, this course will consider whether contemporary work in culture and sexuality has lost, or lost sight of, the 'queerness' that deconstructive strategies of rhetorical reading helped to make apparent: whether, that is, a perverse, if unintended, effect of queer theory on its practitioners has been to straighten out, to normalize, their understanding of how to read. Without positioning the two in opposition to each other, this course will engage the 'queerness' of reading while broaching a critical reading of 'queerness.' The goal of such an enterprise is to shape students into critics with a capacity to intervene effectively in the discourse of cultural studies through their ability to read against the grain of its too frequently reductive politics of thematic interpretation and analysis without losing sight of the political stake inherent not only in readings of culture, but also in the continuous process of reshaping academic cultures of reading."

The emphasis on sex is becoming so important that universities are beginning to make it an area of specialization for their students. At Berkeley, for example, English majors are required to take three courses in an "area of concentration" such as "poetry" or the "Renaissance through Milton." Now there is another option: "Sexual Identities."

Observations

The new courses reflect lots of sex but little love. The classic topics of love sought and love lost, commitment and transience, fidelity and infidelity, being young together and growing old together are rarely mentioned. Marriage and family seem to be mentioned mainly in invidious contexts. In the current environment, the following course sounds quaint and old-fashioned.

- **Vanderbilt University, "Love and the Novel."**

One senses that some professors are beginning to overdose on their own trendiness.

- **University of Southern California, "Contemporary Prose."** Students will "primarily read within the generously morphing genre, the 'avant-pop'" and study "popular music movies, television, the Internet, hypertext and olestra." The course will also explore "the contemporary novel's 'much-touted exhaustion'" and "finally, in good time, beat this perverse notion to its much deserved death."

One professor fights back:

- **University of Florida, "Age of Dryden and Pope,"** emphasizes "what is literary about literature, rather than what is political, sociological, or simply obfuscational." "I consider it a particularly good course for students tired of having no literature taught in their literature courses."

The classics are bowed but not beaten. Georgetown offers a course on the American greats -- Melville, Cooper, Hawthorne, Henry James, and William Faulkner -- with the title, "White Male Writers." There is even the University of California, Santa Barbara's winsome "Unread Shakespeare."

And another course at the same university, "Canon Revision," ponders "[Yale professor] Harold Bloom's extreme contention in his *Western Canon* that there is really only one major author: Shakespeare."